

## Topic

### • I CONCLUSION

- A The dual aspects of the early Church continues today
  - 1 We are called to wait for Jesus to complete the love He has begun in us
  - 2 And we are called to witness to this love to all in our world to the degree we now know it
- B We are called to do both in community

### • II TRAITS OF THE CHURCH: ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC

#### • A "Holy"

- 1 The NT refers to Christians in the church, Christians still alive, as being "saints," as "holy ones"
  - a Acts 9:32
    - (1) As Peter travelled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda.
  - b Romans 15:25
    - (1) Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.
  - c 1 Corinthians 16:15
    - (1) You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, 16 to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.
- 2 One Greek word ("hagios") translates one Hebrew word ("kadosh")
  - a The word describes that which God alone is
  - b The word expresses His inner life
  - c One Latin word "sanctus" is used to translate both "hagios" and "kadosh"
- 3 But two English words are used to translate both "hagios" and "kadosh" -- and these two words may have different English connotations not reflected in the original word they translate
  - a The translator decides which to use on every occasion
  - b The words are
    - (1) "Holy"
    - (2) "Saintly"
- 4 The Church is holy collectively (all of us) and individually (each of us)
  - a We are the Church because in Baptism we die to our faults, sins
  - b And we are filled with God's life, God's Spirit, God's holiness
- 5 The Church is referred to in the "Apostles Creed" as being part of "The Communion of saints"
  - a The terms must be properly understood in their religious setting
    - (1) "Communion" expresses our unity, our being one
    - (2) "Saints" expresses our holiness, our possessing a share in God's Life
  - b Catholics can have a wrong perception of a saint
    - (1) Our Church canonizes certain heroic Christians and claims that they are saints of God
    - (2) There are strict requirements that must be met before a person is honored publicly with the title "saint"
    - (3) This process of canonization can offer us misleading conclusions
      - (a) Incorrectly we can think that we become saints at the moment of our death
      - (b) We can think that sanctity is a reward for a life of heroic virtue
  - c The truths are the exact opposite of these conclusions
    - (1) We become saints at the moment of our baptism
      - (a) Otherwise how could we belong to a "Communion of saints?"
      - (b) Sanctity is not a reward, but a gift
    - (2) We should respond to this gift with a life of heroic virtue
      - (a) Those who believe in their holiness try to live it

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- [2] 13\* When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphas and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.
- [3] 14\* They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
- (2) In John Mary is at the foot of the cross along with the Beloved Disciple
  - (a) John 19:25
    - [1] 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.
    - [2] 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.
- 4 And then some who had not heard of Jesus when He lived began to believe in and experience Him
  - a Other Jews
    - (1) Acts 2:36\*
      - (a) "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37\* When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"
      - (b) 38\* Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
      - (c) 39\* The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40\* With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
      - (d) 41\* Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42\* They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
      - (e) 43\* Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.
    - b The Samaritans were viewed as hated heretics by the Jews
      - (1) They believed in the same God
      - (2) The Jews, however, felt the Samaritans had the wrong beliefs and practices
      - (3) Acts 8:1\*
        - (a) ...3\* But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. 4\* Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.
        - (b) 5\* Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.
        - (c) 6\* When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.
        - (d) 7\* With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8\* So there was great joy in that city.....
        - (e) 14\* When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
        - (f) 15\* When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16\* because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
        - (g) 17\* Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
      - (4) And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

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- (b) They treat themselves and others with the dignity deserved by a saint of God
- 6 There should be a conflict within each person
  - a I am a sinner because of what I have done and do
  - b I am a saint because of what Jesus has done and does
  - c Conflict: which will I claim and live?
    - (1) The height of pride is to see myself as only a sinner
      - (a) My sin is greater than the holiness of Jesus
      - (b) Such a proud thought actually means I can do what Pilate couldn't: kill Jesus forever
    - (2) If I am "only" a sinner I am useless to Enid because people know how to sin without my help
    - (3) The people of Enid need to know how to live as saints
- B "One"
  - 1 Each Christian receives the Spirit of Jesus
    - a The Cross assures us of this reception
    - b This Spirit invites us to **die to self, to all that confines our lives to ourselves**
      - (1) The Spirit we receive is a Spirit that has conquered all the limitations of the flesh
        - (a) A Spirit that unites us to each other
        - (b) A Spirit that unites us to all others in the Church
      - (2) There is nothing automatic about this love because it embraces us in the area of our free will
      - (3) We must cooperate and accept God's love if we are to experience its saving wholeness
  - 2 Therefore, in the Spirit we become the One "Body of Christ"
    - a 1 Corinthians 12:27
      - (1) Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
    - b We all receive the "Spirit of Jesus"
      - (1) Spirit means "life force" -- that which makes Jesus, Jesus
      - (2) Since we all share the same life force of Jesus, we are united by Him to each other
      - (3) We become His body, His flesh -- His visible presence here on earth
    - c Paul refers to individual Christians as "members," parts, of the one Body of Christ
      - (1) In a human body, the parts differ
      - (2) Because of these differences, the parts need each other to live
    - d Paul says precisely the same thing is true for the Church
      - (1) We all have different "gifts"
      - (2) These gifts are not given to us in order to divide us because of our differences
      - (3) They are given to us to unite us through our need for the services others offer because of their gifts
      - (4) 1 Corinthians 12:4
        - (a) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
        - (b) 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
    - e We are called to give "flesh" to God's loving Spirit in our world
      - (1) Not as individuals
      - (2) But as a community
      - (3) We witness by our unity, or lack of it, as much as by what we individually say and do
    - f We witness by what we are: one!
      - (1) John 17:20

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- (a) "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;
  - (b) 21\* "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.
- (2) "That the world may believe that You sent Me."
  - (a) Our lack of unity is one of the causes for the failure of others to believe
  - (b) We are to be a "Light to the World"
    - [1] Matthew 5:14
      - {1} "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.
      - {2} 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.
    - [2] The people of the world, living so fragmented and apart, were to be impressed by our sense of community
- 3 Unity, community is essential to our witness
  - a At the start of 1 Corinthians, Paul devotes 4 chapters to censuring the Church over its lack of true community
    - (1) There wasn't division between Churches or within the Church
    - (2) There just were sects, cliques, arising within the Church
    - (3) Paul sees cliques as absolutely contradictory to these same people living and witnessing as Christians
      - (a) 1 Corinthians 1:10
        - [1] Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
        - [2] 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.
  - b Paul could never, would never, understand or tolerate modern Christian life
    - (1) There are separate Christian Churches of the same denomination in cities
      - (a) The separate congregations might be necessary because of the size of the Church
      - (b) But it becomes intolerable when these churches have no concern for each other's welfare
      - (c) And it becomes worse when they actually compete against each other
    - (2) And these different Christian churches do not cooperate
      - (a) At best they ignore each other
      - (b) At worst they attack each other
  - c Later in the letter, Paul fixes upon the One Bread used at the Lord's Supper to make the same point
    - (1) 1 Corinthians 10:16
      - (a) Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?
      - (b) 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.
    - (2) The bread becomes the one "Body of Christ"
      - (a) It is divided and shared by many, by all, in the Lord's Supper
      - (b) Christ's Body then can only be one if we are united with each other
- 4 Because Matthew's experience of Jesus reveals that Jesus is know in community, Matthew might be the NT work that best spotlights the importance of unity to Christianity
  - a Matthew 18:20
    - (1) For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."
  - b An explanation is necessary
    - (1) Matthew isn't referring to magic
      - (a) If two people say "Jesus" that does not mean He is there

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- (b) The Hebrew language is very real and concrete
- (c) According to the thought of the time, the name captures and determines the essence of a person
- (2) When two or three gather in His name, they gather in that which makes Jesus, Jesus
  - (a) But Jesus is "living service" – the whole sweep of His ministry shows this
  - (b) His Spirit is the giving of self to bless another
  - (c) So we must gather to give ourselves to others for their benefit if we are to gather in "His" name
  - (d) When, and only when people do this, can Jesus be experienced as present in their hearts
- c Matthew's sharing leads to a challenging conclusion
  - (1) In community Jesus is experienced in a way in which we are not able to experience Him alone!
    - (a) This occurs only where there is true community: a group of Christians serving each other
    - (b) It does not occur where a group accidentally has assembled in the same physical space with separate individuals relating with Jesus but not with each other
  - (2) Consequently
    - (a) Where 20 are gathered in this loving service, Jesus is experienced in a way not possible when only 2 gather
    - (b) Where 200 are gathered in this loving service, Jesus is experienced in a way not possible when only 20 gather
  - (3) Therefore
    - (a) Our lack of caring hurts all of us
    - (b) The larger the group that unites in caring, the better it is for all of us
    - (c) You are not a luxury in my life! Nor am I in yours!
- 5 1 John calls Christians who break the unity of the community the Antichrist!!!!
  - a 1 John 2:18
    - (1) Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour.
    - (2) 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us
  - b Note that this separation is not from Jesus, but from the community
    - (1) Those who leave continue to believe they are following Jesus
    - (2) But they don't do it the way the Johanine community does
- 6 The human body serves as a warning to us
  - a There is a difference between healthy and cancerous cells in a body:
    - (1) Healthy cells take from the body what they need and give to the body what they can
    - (2) Cancerous cells take from the body what they need but contribute back nothing
      - (a) No community
      - (b) No service
  - b Sadly many Christians are spiritual cancer cells
    - (1) They come to Church and take; they come to save themselves
      - (a) They establish no community
      - (b) They offer nothing of themselves to the community
    - (2) They are not to blame -- they were never taught what they should be
      - (a) They were told that being Christian consisted in accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior and saving self
      - (b) They were not told that being Christian consisted in being a vital, contributing part of a community
- C "Catholic"

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- 1 The term in the creed does not refer to the name of our Church
- 2 Rather, it is a description of the Church,
  - a The universal Church
  - b The whole, the entire Church
  - c It includes all other Christians
- 3 The term is a challenge of what we, as Christians are, and must become
- 4 The American Heritage Dictionary offers definitions of the adjective "catholic"
  - a "Of broad or liberal scope; comprehensive."
  - b "Including or concerning all humankind; universal."
- 5 We are the Body of Christ united in the Spirit of Christ
  - a The limits of the Body must be the limits set by His Spirit -- not by our spirits -- or, worse, by our flesh
    - (1) Jesus died for all
    - (2) He loved all
    - (3) And He served all
  - b Thus the Body of Christ must include everyone,
- 6 The opposite of Catholic is parochial, limited.
  - a It's the natural feeling of all life, of all living creatures
    - (1) Life seeks the health of those within its boundaries
      - (a) It serves its own person, family, clan
      - (b) It serves its own city, nation
    - (2) As long as each group seeks its own welfare
      - (a) Conflicts are inevitable
      - (b) Peace is impossible
  - b Jesus calls us to die to self, to the limits of our flesh
    - (1) He challenges us to think of others
    - (2) He challenges us to give ourselves to serve the needs of others
      - (a) Including those different from us
      - (b) Including our enemies
      - (c) Matthew 5:43
        - [1] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
        - [2] 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
        - [3] 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
    - (3) Our Church community is not to be restricted to those who
      - (a) Think like us
      - (b) Dress like us
      - (c) Act like us
      - (d) Admire us
- 7 The experience of Jesus in the early Church washed away all human boundaries
  - a Mark
    - (1) Jesus declares all foods "clean"

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- (2) His action was an action symbolic of declaring all peoples clean
- (3) Mark 7:17
  - (a) *When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile.*
  - (b) *19\* since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles.*
- (4) Jesus makes a very important statement
  - (a) "Clean" and "Unclean" foods separated the eaters into two distinct, isolated classes
  - (b) Declaring all foods clean meant Jesus
    - [1] Was declaring all peoples who eat any foods clean
    - [2] Was eliminating all the barriers isolating people from each other
- b Matthew
  - (1) Matthew 28:19
    - (a) *16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.*
    - (b) *17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*
    - (c) *18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
    - (d) *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
  - (2) Before Easter, the disciples' mission had a limited scope -- it had boundaries restricted to Israel alone
    - (a) Matthew 10:1\*
      - [1] *He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*
      - [2] *...5\* These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6\* Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7\* As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'*
      - [4] *8\* Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*
    - (b) It was as if the Spirit of Jesus was confined by His body which united Him (through human blood) to His fellow Jews
    - (c) But Easter celebrated the victory of His Spirit over the limitations of the flesh
  - (3) After Easter, the mission exploded to include all humanity
- c Acts
  - (1) The book demonstrates the spread of the Church
  - (2) The story begins in Jerusalem
    - (a) Acts 1:1\*
      - [1] *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2\* until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*
      - [2] *3\* After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*
      - [3] *4\* On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.*
  - (3) And it ends with Paul preaching Jesus in Rome
    - (a) Acts 28:13\*

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- [1] From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. 14\* There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.
- [2] ....16\* When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.
- [3] 17\* Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.
- [4] 20\* For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."
- [5] ...23\* They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.
- [6] 24\* Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.
- [7] 25\* They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:
- [8] 26\* "Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."
- [9] 27\* For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'
- [10] 28\* "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"
- [11] 29\* 30\* For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31\* Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d The ending of the Gospel of Mark
  - (1) It offers us a critical reason why we must be catholic in reality, not just name
  - (2) Mark 16:5
    - a As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.
    - (b) 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.
    - (c) 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."
  - (3) Jesus will be experienced in Galilee,
    - (a) Not "here" in Judea or Jerusalem
    - (b) "Here" (Judea) is where love is parochial, not catholic
    - (c) "Here" is where some are considered "Unclean"
  - (4) There is a reason why Jesus can only be experienced in Galilee
    - (a) We must remember that the terms "Judea/Jerusalem" and "Galilee" are used symbolically, not geographically by Mark
    - (b) Galilee symbolizes the place where Jesus unites all by ministering equally to all; it is symbolic of universal, catholic, love
    - (c) Jerusalem is the place where only Jews are welcome in the Temple; it is symbolic of parochial love
      - [1] It stands for love offered only to one's own kind (Jews)
      - [2] No one in the city ever welcomes Jesus when he enters on Palm Sunday
        - {1} Mark 11:1\*
          - ((1)) As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the



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village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no-one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

- ((2)) 7\* When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.
- ((3)) 9\* Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10\* "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"
- ((4)) 11\* Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.
  - {2} No one from the city joins them in shouting
    - ((1)) The impression is given that He enters the city unobserved
    - ((2)) And like a tourist who's never been in the big city before, He studies the Temple
  - [3] The city kills Jesus within 5 days the only time that He is ever there
    - {1} It cannot accept Him; it must reject Him
    - {2} He cannot be experienced there: limited love cannot experience Universal Love
  - (5) We should be challenged by Mark's statement telling us where Jesus will be experienced
    - (a) Mark, thus, explains why Jesus is so little experienced by most Christians
      - [1] They are still living in their own Jerusalems
      - [2] They are living within the boundaries of their parishes
    - (b) Jesus can be experienced only in Galilee -- universal love can only be experienced by those trying to love universally
- D "Apostolic"
  - 1 Two possible interpretations can be made to the use of the term in the Creed
    - a Both are valid
    - b Both are significant in what they teach us
  - 2 The First is that our Church today, our faith today, is founded on the witness of the Apostles; it is not an aberration created by us
    - a Our Christian, Catholic experience of Jesus is not our own creation
      - (1) Of course we will always have newer, deeper insights into His meaning for us
      - (2) But these insights are into the same Jesus who was experienced by the Apostles
    - b Rather it is an experience transmitted continually through the centuries by a long line of successors
      - (1) The Catholic Church today has a direct, unbroken line through the centuries all the way back to the Apostles
      - (2) And through the Apostles, the Catholic Church today has a correct experience of Jesus Himself
    - c The experience of Jesus transmitted by the Apostles has passed through the culture of each time and place
      - (1) It has been expressed in the thoughts and in the ignorance of each of these cultures
      - (2) Slowly errors crept in regarding the way the description has been expressed in words
        - (a) These errors were especially prominent during the Dark Ages
          - [1] It was an age of superstition
          - [2] It was an age of fear
          - [3] It was an age when Christianity was tainted with notions kept active from pagan religions
        - (b) Because Christianity was passed on in the ideas of each particular culture, later generations would confuse the terms used to express an experience with Christianity itself
          - [1] One generation tried to express the three experiences of God, (the three "faces" God revealed to humanity,) as "Three Persons; One God"
          - [2] We, today, have a radically different understanding of the English word "person"
          - [3] Reading our meaning into yesterday's expression can complicate our experiencing God

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- (3) Despite the errors, the experience of Jesus always remained real in the Church
  - (a) Through all the worst ages there were still those in the Church who responded to the needs of all God's forgotten children
  - (b) There were always witnesses to our serving, loving, saving Risen Jesus
- (4) There must always be a tension between
  - (a) The witness, the living tradition, of the Apostles
  - (b) The expression and adaptation of this experience to the newness of each place and time
- (5) Either side of this tension can be exaggerated to the detriment of the living Church
  - (a) The Tradition can freeze, failing to adapt to new cultural demands
  - (b) The changes can be so extreme they fail to reflect the Tradition
- 3 The Second is that the Church today, as well as the Church of each generation, has a mission to be apostolic
  - a The whole Church is "apostolic" -- as a group and as individuals, we have been officially delegated by Jesus to serve others
    - (1) To share with them our experience of Him
    - (2) To "preach the Good News of the Kingship"
  - b We are not sent to "preach" as we usually understand the word
    - (1) To shout and harangue
    - (2) To threaten and badger
  - c We are to preach to all in our life situation as Jesus preached in His life situation
    - (1) By our loving -- living the loving acceptance we have received
      - (a) By our accepting others as Jesus has accepted us
      - (b) By our accepting them as possessing the sacredness our faith has taught us is our baptismal possession
    - (2) By our living
      - (a) We witness with our talents and weaknesses
      - (b) We witness in our unique life situation
  - d In order to preach Jesus, in order to be Apostles.
    - (1) We must first be disciples
      - (a) We must be people experiencing love acting in our lives
      - (b) We must be people staying with being loved; learning how love wonderfully loves us
    - (2) Then we must share with others love as we have first experienced being loved by Jesus
      - (a) We must start being apostolic
      - (b) We must begin living our Confirmation
  - e Love must love to stay alive
    - (1) It always withers if it is only possessed, kept, "appreciated"
    - (2) To grow, it must be offered to others
    - (3) The more it is offered, the deeper and richer is it experienced
- III THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION
  - A Some sort of organization, some structure, is made necessary because of the Church's need to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
  - B Jesus in the Gospels gave Peter a special position of leadership
    - 1 This unique position is spotlighted in each of the four Gospels as well as in Acts and in Paul's letters
    - 2 All four of the lists of the Twelve put Peter first
    - 3 Please note that in all the following quotes the "you" is singular, limited to Peter alone,
      - a Mark 16:5

## Topic

- (1) As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.
- (2) 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."
- b Matthew 16:17
  - (1) And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.
  - (2) 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.
  - (3) 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- c Luke 22:31
  - (1) "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."
- d John 21:15
  - (1) When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ["you" is implied]
  - (2) 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."
  - (3) 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."
- C The history of the Church from its first days down through the centuries illustrates the continuing need for organization
  - 1 Structure was necessary for the unity of the Churches
    - a The Church was always organized on the local level
      - (1) In all probability, Church worship was led by the person in whose home the Christians gathered
      - (2) Such leadership would flow naturally from
        - (a) The use of the individual's home
        - (b) And the prominence of an individual capable of owning a home large enough for the Christian gathering
    - b By the time the "Captivity Letters" were written, a clear organization began to emerge
      - (1) Paul addresses the letters to "Timothy" and to "Titus"
        - (a) Titus: 1:1
          - [1] Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,
          - [2] 3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; 4 To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.
        - (b) 1 Timothy: 1:1
          - [1] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, 2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
      - (2) The letters could be accepted by the Church because local congregations were familiar with established leaders
    - c Acts offers an idealized picture of the Church existing as one as it spread throughout the world
      - (1) New Churches always were approved and accepted by the Mother Church in Jerusalem
      - (2) Acts 8:14

## Topic

- (a) When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
  - (b) 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
  - (c) 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
- (3) Sending Peter and John who impose hands showed that new groups were not to exist on their own
- 2 Organization was also necessary if the Church was to carry out its mission, the mission of Jesus
  - a There were two facets to this mission -- as revealed by the way the first disciples were called in Mark and Matthew
    - (1) We are to be "fishers of men" -- we are to serve the world
    - (2) And we are to "mend the nets" -- we are to serve the Church
    - (3) Mark 1:16
      - (a) As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.
      - (b) 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.
      - (c) 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him
  - b Jesus "rules" ("serves") both the Church and the world -- He serves them with all His love
  - c So Christians must serve both the Church and the world with all His love, with all its love
- D When Jesus gave the Church His mission, He shared His Spirit with the Church
  - 1 He guaranteed to the Church as a whole everything that we need to carry out our vocation in order to serve all the word's needs (not wants)
  - 2 The vitality to carry out the Church's mission often comes from spontaneous, charismatic, leaders
    - a Individuals receive special gifts, charisms, to serve the Church needs, locally and universally
      - (1) 1 Corinthians 12:1
        - (a) Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2\* You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.
        - (b) 3\* Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no-one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 4\* There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
        - (c) 5\* There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6\* There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
        - (d) 7\* Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
        - (e) ....27\* Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
        - (f) 28\* And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.
        - (g) 29\* Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30\* Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?
        - (h) 31\* But eagerly desire the greater gifts.
    - (2) Note that Paul says not all receive each of these gifts
      - (a) There must be specialization in the Church
      - (b) And, because of this specialization, there must be **hierarchy** if there is not to be anarchy
  - b They were not part of the ordained leadership -- the leadership referred to as the "hierarchy"
    - (1) The word refers to "ranks of leadership"
    - (2) It is derived from the Greek word for "the **rule**" or "the **Power**" of the "**high priest**"
  - c Sometimes those gifted with a charism were also ordained leaders
  - d But the Church enjoyed no stability regarding who might possess charisms

## Topic

- e And no one individual was ever assured all the charisms the Church needed for all of its varied spiritual needs
- f And the charisms were not hereditary
- 3 Stable leadership comes from the *ordained leadership* Jesus offers the Church
  - a We do not always have *charismatic individuals* present to guide us
    - (1) We can't rely upon having a continuing line of living *saints*
    - (2) We can experience a need and not recognize the individuals God is blessing with the *charisms* we need to resolve it
  - b But we do have a *stable leadership* to guide us in the hierarchy of the Church
    - (1) Sadly, these *leaders* are often not *charismatic*, dynamic, leaders
    - (2) Even more tragically, they sometimes are pure charlatans
- E Bishop:
  - 1 A Bishop is a "Sacrament" of the Church
    - a He is a symbol of Jesus still serving the Church and the world
    - b He should be a symbol of Jesus serving with all of His self, all of His Spirit, all of His love
  - 2 He can be a Sacrament of the Church because He can serve all the needs of a local Church
    - a He is offered all gifts of the Spirit
      - (1) Teaching (Preaching)
      - (2) Acting (Sacraments)
    - b Therefore he can serve all the needs of His world
  - 3 He is a model, therefore, of what the Church is and should be
  - 4 He has full "authority"
    - a We must not revert from a religious understanding of "authority," the definition Jesus offered, to the world's definition
      - (1) Matthew 20:24
        - (a) When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.
        - (b) 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--
        - (c) 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
    - b Religious "authority" does not mean exercising power but service and love
  - 5 Religious "obedience" must be understood against the background of a proper understanding of "authority"
    - a If it is employed properly, religious "authority" is exercised by loving; proper religious "obedience," therefore, must be exercised by allowing oneself to be loved, served
    - (2) John 13:1
      - (1) It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.
      - (2) 2\* The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.
      - (3) 3\* Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;
      - (4) 4\* so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist.
      - (5) 5\* After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.
      - (6) 6\* He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7\* Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."
      - (7) 8\* "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

## Topic

- c We are challenged to abandon isolation and self will
- F Pope
  - 1 There is to be "One Church"
    - a John 17:20
      - (1) "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;
      - (2) 21\* "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.
    - b **Bishops** serve local Churches, the Church in a confined geographic area
    - c The unity of the whole Church spread everywhere throughout the world demands one leader, one **bishop**, who can be a sacrament of the universal Church
  - 2 The universal Church, not just the Church in Enid, has been called to serve your welfare
    - a Jesus serves the needs of
      - (1) Each individual
      - (2) Each local Church community
      - (3) Each regional Church community (each "diocese")
      - (4) The whole universal, united, Church throughout the world
    - b Consequently, the Church must do the same
    - c One person must always be a sign, a symbol, of this universal service
    - d This is a comforting picture!
      - (1) Jesus has called each person in the universal Church to meet my needs today
      - (2) Wow! And one **bishop** is the symbol of all this
  - 3 Jesus guarantees to one person in the Church because of his position what He guarantees to the whole Church through so many individual charisms
    - a He guarantees that this person can offer each of us in the Church all that we need for our salvation, for peace
    - b We call this person the "**Pope**"
    - c In reality, the person is the **Bishop of the Diocese of Rome** -- and, because of this, also the **Bishop of the Universal Church**
  - 4 Of course, historically, many popes have failed in their duty
    - a They have ruled in the world's sense of the term
    - b They have demanded service rather than offering it
  - 5 Service demands
    - a Guidance in truth
    - b Guidance in living
      - (1) Paul denounces some practices of the Christians in his Churches
      - (2) He denounced them because these actions hurt individuals or the Church or the world
    - c So the Pope is charged with responsibility to speak on issues of
      - (1) **Dogma** -- what we believe
      - (2) **Morals** -- how we live
      - (3) And **worship** -- how we gather to celebrate the presence of Jesus through Word, Sacrament, and community
  - 6 It is important that we remember who the pope is
    - a He is a representative, a symbol, of the unity of the whole Church
    - b All the **bishops** of the world as a unity also symbolize the Church's oneness
  - 7 Infallibility
    - a The ability of popes to teach with certitude is founded on what Jesus is
      - (1) John 8:31

Topic

- (a) Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
- (2) John 14:6
  - (a) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- (3) He will not lead us astray
- (4) His Spirit, alive within and among us, alone is "truth"
  - (a) We must believe in this love to be saved
  - (b) We must believe in -- not believe about -- we must commit ourselves to Jesus and His love
- b Infallibility is founded upon Jesus
  - (1) He is loving, serving, dying on our behalf
  - (2) The Cross is the true sign of our dignity, our worth
  - (3) All other messages about our worth are lies
- c The need for infallibility is also based upon the nature of the world
  - (1) John 8:44
    - (a) You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
  - (2) John 16:8
    - (a) And when he [The Advocate, the Holy Spirit] comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:
  - (3) John 17:25
    - (a) "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.
  - (4) These Biblical quotes assert
    - (a) That the world in which we live has been offered distorted values
      - [1] These values lure us into false offers of peace and fulfillment
      - [2] But they cannot and do not satisfy us; they do not "save" us
    - (b) What are these "lies,?" These false values?
      - [1] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through wealth
      - [2] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through sexual pleasures
      - [3] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through looking beautiful and/or youthful and/or thin
      - [4] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through alcohol and/or mood altering drugs
      - [5] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through popularity
      - [6] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through power
      - [7] The world tells us we can find fulfillment through material comforts
    - (c) And human experience testifies to the inability of any or all of these to offer us inner contentment
    - (d) We need guidance, therefore, to discover the truth
      - [1] Of our nature -- we are made in the image of a God of Love
      - [2] Of our essential needs -- we are made to be loved for who we are
      - [3] Of our mission -- we are made to share the love we have received
- d Because the whole Church continues the presence of Jesus in our world, the whole Church must possess the infallible assurance of Jesus
- e Because all Bishops together represent the whole Church, they are symbols of Jesus and must possess His infallible assurance
  - (1) But only when they are fully and officially acting as Jesus assuring us of truth

**Topic**

- (2) They do this when they meet as an "Ecumenical Council"
- (3) But even then they do it only when the Council teaches that a truth is infallibly true
  - (a) Most Council teachings are not done this way
  - (b) The Second Vatican Council issued reams of document teachings and not one of these statements taught infallibly
- f Because the Pope is the visible symbol of unity of the whole Church, He is the symbol of and must possess the infallible assurance of Jesus Himself
  - (1) But only when he is fully and officially acting as Jesus assuring us of truth
    - (a) And only when he teaches a truth as infallibly true
    - (b) Nearly no papal teachings are done this way
  - (2) Only twice in the entire 2000 year history of the Church have popes done this on their own
    - (a) 1850's -- the "Immaculate Conception"
    - (b) 1950's -- the "Assumption of Mary" bodily into heaven at moment of her death
- 8 Many other Christians seem to hold to a personal infallibility
  - a They hold to the individual interpretation of the Bible
    - (1) Experience should show the dangers that can flow from such individual reliance
    - (2) I can err; you can err
  - b But Jesus assures us He won't and can't
    - (1) Nor can
      - (a) The whole Church
      - (b) All Bishops
      - (c) The pope
    - (2) When the matter is important
- G The Church Structure today
  - 1 The Church is organized into geographic areas each called a "diocese"
    - a Each diocese is served by a bishop
    - b These bishops, in turn, are served by priests and deacons
  - 2 Each diocese is organized into local church gatherings, called "parishes"
    - a Each parish has its own "field of activity," own boundaries,
    - b Each should be served by a pastor
    - c Some of these pastors are served by assistant priests and deacons
    - d Some parishes have smaller communities attached -- called Mission churches
      - (1) These parishes have no resident priests
      - (2) Missions are served by a priest from the "mother church"
  - 3 So the structure consists of
    - a A Bishop
      - (1) Completely able to serve his people
      - (2) Able to preach and teach
      - (3) And able to offer all seven sacraments
    - b Priest
      - (1) Unable by himself to serve his people
      - (2) Able to preach and teach with his bishop's permission
      - (3) And able to offer six of the sacraments
      - (4) Not able to ordain other deacons, priests, and bishops -- can't insure the future existence of the Church community by himself



**Topic**

- c Deacon
  - (1) Unable by himself to serve God's people
  - (2) Able to preach and teach with a bishop's permission
  - (3) Able to offer
    - (a) Baptism
    - (b) Communion (Eucharist)
    - (c) Witness weddings
  - (4) Not able to
    - (a) Ordain other priests, deacons, and bishops
    - (b) Confirm
    - (c) Celebrate Mass
    - (d) Reconcile
- H All other terms used for clerics are purely honorary
  - 1 Cardinal
    - a. Today they are usually bishops
    - b. They elect the pope
    - c. And they advise the pope
  - 2 Archbishop
    - a. He is simply a bishop
    - b. He serves his own area called an "archdiocese" and, at the same time, oversees several dioceses for Rome
  - 3 Auxiliary bishop
    - a. He is a bishop without his own diocese
    - b. He is a helper to the bishop of a large diocese
  - 4 Coadjutor Bishop
    - a. He is an auxiliary bishop with one difference
    - b. He enjoys the right of succession to the bishop of a diocese
  - 5 Monsignor
    - a. He is a priest who receives a title that is purely honorary
    - b. Originally he was a priest honored to be part of the pope's household staff
    - c. By our priests' choice, we haven't had any new ones in Oklahoma City for over 40 years
  - 6 Vicar
    - a. He is a priest who officially represents the bishop in a subdivision of a diocese
    - b. The diocese is divided into geographic zones for administration
- IV CONCLUSION
  - A Remember: the Church is a union of those who share the life of Jesus
    - 1. Jesus is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
    - 2. So is the Church
  - B What we are, we must ever strive to live
    - 1. Our unity in community
    - 2. Our saintliness
    - 3. Our universality
    - 4. Our commission to serve